



UNIVERSITY OF HAWAII SYSTEM

‘ŌNAEHANA KULANUI O HAWAII

Legislative Testimony

Hō'ike Mana'o I Mua O Ka 'Aha'ōlelo

Testimony Presented Before the
Senate Committee on Labor and Technology
Senate Committee on Higher Education
Monday, March 18, 2024, at 3:00 p.m.

By

Debora Halbert, Vice President for Academic Strategy
University of Hawai'i System

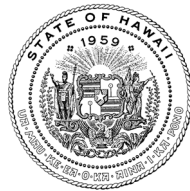
HB 2720 HD3 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chairs Aquino and Kim, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani, and Members of the
Committees:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on HB 2720 HD3, which establishes
a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of
Hawai'i and community college system.

The University of Hawai'i (UH) has had ongoing discussions with the Graduate Student
Organization (the UH Mānoa leadership entity for graduate students) elected
representatives regarding this issue, and UH is deliberately not taking a position on the
issue of unionization.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on this measure.



JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR

SYLVIA LUKE
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR

SABRINA NASIR
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM
HAWAII EMPLOYER-UNION HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST FUND
OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

STATE OF HAWAII
DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
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ADMINISTRATIVE AND RESEARCH OFFICE
BUDGET, PROGRAM PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT DIVISION
FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION DIVISION
OFFICE OF FEDERAL AWARDS MANAGEMENT

WRITTEN ONLY

TESTIMONY BY LUIS P. SALAVERIA
DIRECTOR, DEPARTMENT OF BUDGET AND FINANCE
TO THE SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY AND
HIGHER EDUCATION
ON
HOUSE BILL NO. 2720, H.D. 3

March 18, 2024
3:00 p.m.
Room 224 and Videoconference

RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Department of Budget and Finance offers comments on this bill.

This measure allows graduate students employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH) to collectively bargain by amending Chapter 89-6, HRS, to remove the exemption from collective bargaining (CB) for graduate student assistants employed by UH, and to authorize a new Bargaining Unit (BU) 16 effective upon the Hawai'i labor relations board's determination, after petition by the graduate assistants, that they are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit.

The long-term cost implications of allowing graduate student assistants to collectively bargain is a concern for the State budget. Negotiation of pay increases for graduate students need to be weighed against the foregone revenue from tuition waivers and other fees that graduate students do not pay as part of their assistantships. Further, their work hours and work conditions would all need to be part of CB negotiations that might not fit the flexible schedules that graduate students require to complete their academic program.

The Legislature has created two new BUs in recent years and is considering creating others, in addition to this one, this session. There are concerns with the increasing administrative costs and complexities, negotiating, arbitrating, and managing of contracts for every increasing numbers of BUs.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments.

UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION
2245 Campus Road, Hemenway Hall 212
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822

Resolution 08-2024

Relating to Collective Bargaining of Graduate Assistants

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION:

WHEREAS, graduate assistants play a vital role in the operation of the University of Hawaii by conducting research, teaching, and performing administrative duties.

WHEREAS, graduate assistants face difficult working conditions including long hours, low compensation, limited job security, and unclear recourse for workplace mistreatment.

WHEREAS, collective bargaining provides an avenue to address poor working conditions, advocate for worker needs, and establish workplace policies that promote the wellbeing of graduate assistants and a supportive working environment.

WHEREAS, collective bargaining by graduate assistants has been shown to be a successful strategy to improve working conditions at various other U.S. universities.

WHEREAS, graduate assistants do not fit well in any current bargaining unit in the State of Hawaii due to the unique nature of graduate students as both students and employees of the university.

BE IT RESOLVED, we, the Graduate Student Organization of the University of Hawaii at Manoa, in order to promote improved working conditions for graduate assistants and a more supportive academic environment at the University of Hawai'i support the establishment of a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants through House Bill 2720.

Introducers: Benjamin Wiseman, Representative for Plant and Environmental Protection Sciences and Employment and Compensation Chair; Charles Addey, Representative for Oceanography.

Co-introducers: Ivet Rodriguez, Representative for Kinesiology and Rehab Science; Dorian Daimer, Representative for Physics; Kyle Conner, Representative for Oceanography; Moseli Motsoehli, Representative for Computer Science; Ikenna Nometa for Mathematics Representative.; McKinley Prager, Representative for Chemistry.

Vote to Approve House Resolution 08-2024: Ayes: 33. Nays: 0. Abstentions: 2.

APPROVED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA GRADUATE STUDENT ORGANIZATION ON THE 15TH DAY OF FEBRUARY, 2024.



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Osa Tui, Jr.
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TESTIMONY TO THE HAWAII SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY AND COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Item: **HB2720 HD3 - Relating to collective bargaining**
Position: **Oppose**
Hearing: **March 18, 2024, 3:00 p.m., Conference Room 224**
Submitter: **Osa Tui, Jr. – President, Hawai'i State Teachers Association**

Chair Aquino, Chair Kim, Vice Chair Moriwaki, Vice Chair Kidani and members of the committee,

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association **opposes** HB2720 HD3 which exempts graduate assistants from collective bargaining until they petition the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Board determines the graduate assistants are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit, at which point a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and its community college system will be established.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association (HSTA) was in full support of HB2720 as originally drafted, but cannot support the HD3 which exempts the graduate students from collective bargaining. Unlike the characterization in the description of HB2720 HD3, the graduate assistants are absolutely ready to be placed into a bargaining unit and HSTA and the National Education Association (NEA), of which HSTA is an affiliate, stand ready to support them.

Questions and concerns that were brought up on February 8, 2024 in the joint Senate LBT/HRE committee hearing relating to SB3317 - Relating to collective bargaining. That bill also sought to establish a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i (UH) and community college system.

In 2015, the legislature passed HB553 which was to remove part-time and full-time graduate assistants from being both exempted from inclusion in a bargaining unit and exempted from collective bargaining rights. Gov. David Ige subsequently vetoed that bill stating that they were students first and employees second.

In seeing the need for more organization to deal with the issue, Academic Labor United (ALU) was formed by the UH graduate assistants in 2017 to address the fact that the UH and community college

system did not have any contractual obligation to discuss graduate assistants' terms of employment including working conditions, benefits, and compensation.

After many years of struggle, ALU received favorable rulings from both the Hawai'i Supreme Court (HSC) and the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board (HLRB). On April 5, 2023, the HSC determined that ALU had the right to petition the HLRB to determine if they were public employees. On January 4, 2024, the HLRB declared:

For the reasons stated above, the Board declares that Petitioner's graduate assistant members are public employees as defined under HRS § 89-2.

Now that a definitive ruling has come from the HLRB that the graduate assistants are public employees, the next step is to determine which bargaining unit would be most appropriate for the graduate assistants. During the February 8, 2024 Senate LBT/HRE hearing, Chair Kim stated the following:

The unions have all come in support, but they're not willing to take them on in their union so that is of concern.

It is the HSTA's belief that ALU is unique enough to need their own designated bargaining unit, Bargaining Unit (BU) 16. Unlike other government employee groups that wish to switch from their current bargaining unit and form their own bargaining unit, the UH graduate assistants do not currently exist under any current bargaining unit.

HSTA believes that the work performed by the graduate assistants fall well outside of the scope of BU 5 as defined by Hawai'i Revised Statutes §89-6(a)(5):

Teachers and other personnel of the department of education under the same pay schedule, including part-time employees working less than twenty hours a week who are equal to one-half of a full-time equivalent;

This was affirmed by the January 4, 2024 HLRB ruling which declared that the graduate assistants do not belong to BU 5 and neither to BUs 1, 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, and 15. The communities of interest do not intersect for HSTA and UH graduate assistants. HSTA bargains with the Hawai'i Department of Education and the Hawai'i Board of Education and represents employees in the Hawai'i PK-12 public school system. The UH graduate assistants would bargain with the University of Hawai'i and the UH Board of Regents and are employees of the UH and community college system. The graduate assistants also would not likely fall under the same pay scale as BU 5.

During the February 8, 2024 Senate LBT/HRE hearing, Chair Aquino stated the following:

To the NEA and to the HSTA who have shown probably the most support and administrative support at this point in time, we'd like to see how you folks are being involved and how we can get to the finish line for this particular group. If that information, and all information to the questions posted, can be provided to the chairs of the joint committees.

HSTA and the National Education Association (NEA) have been providing support to ALU and will continue to support ALU during this fledgling stage. As mentioned earlier, HSTA is an affiliate of the NEA.

ALU took a non-binding ranked-choice vote in November of 2023 regarding national affiliation. The choices were between the NEA and the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME). NEA came away with 76 percent of the first-choice votes cast.

Given the strong indication to affiliate with the NEA, HSTA has stepped up our support for our potential sister-union, ALU, should they be granted their own bargaining unit. For the time being, HSTA has provided testimony in strong support of HB2720 as originally drafted and the HD2 (and its equivalent SB3317) and helped to shepherd ALU leaders through the legislative process. HSTA has also met with ALU members through their General Assembly. Additionally, HSTA has begun work, with the support of the NEA, to secure legal representation and advice on the next steps towards forming a nonprofit labor union under Section 501(c)(5) of the IRS code and to ensure all proper registrations and filings are processed. HSTA and the NEA will also guide ALU through their other needs they will require including supporting training in the area of nonprofit fiduciary obligations as well as collective bargaining and exclusive representation, which includes but is not limited to the bargaining process within the public sector and the State of Hawai'i, the formulation of grievance processes, and methods to support healthy labor management relations. The NEA in particular is very experienced and has access to a multitude of subject matter experts who work to support and are well-versed in issues affecting graduate assistant unions throughout the country. ALU is attending and participating in the NEA's Higher Education Conference this month with opportunities to build relationships and share best practices with graduate assistants from across the country.

In a state like Hawai'i where collective bargaining rights are enshrined in our state constitution, Academic Labor United has been diligently jumping over each obstacle and hurdle put in their way as they fight tooth-and-nail for the recognition and respect they should be afforded for the valuable work they perform as government workers.

There have been many struggles along the way and there will continue to be struggles as ALU works with passion and drive to organize and improve their conditions as public workers. Having the graduate assistants go back to the HLRB once more and then come back to the legislature another year is just another set of unnecessary obstacles. The legislature should just create BU 16 and then allow the HLRB to place the graduate assistants there once the bargaining unit is there for them.

Please remove this final obstacle that remains in the path of University of Hawai'i graduate assistants to become their own bargaining unit with a legitimate seat at the bargaining table to advocate for themselves. HSTA stands ready to assist them in whatever way they need.

The Hawai'i State Teachers Association asks your committee to **amend** this bill as it is drafted and revert to the original language that did not include exempting graduate assistants from collective bargaining.



The Committee on Labor and Technology
and
The Committee on Higher Education
March 18, 2024
3:00 PM
Room 224

RE: **HB 2720, HD 3, Relating to Collective Bargaining**

Attention: Chairs Henry Aquino and Donna Mercado Kim, Vice Chairs Sharon Moriwaki and Michelle Kidani, and members of the Committees

The University of Hawaii Professional Assembly (UHPA) supports the intent and purpose of HB 2720, HD 3, allowing graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and community college system to collectively bargain upon determination by the Hawaii Labor Relations Board (HLRB).

UHPA supports all public employees' right to organize and to participate in collective bargaining. Taking the recent HLRB decision into account, UHPA believes it is appropriate for this group of public employees to establish their own bargaining unit, since they currently do not fit within any of the existing 15 categorical bargaining units. Doing so would allow these public employees to better secure their interests through collective bargaining on the specific issues that graduate assistants are seeking to obtain.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on HB 2720, HD 3.

Respectfully submitted,

Christian L. Fern
Executive Director
University of Hawaii Professional Assembly



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Executive Director

March 17, 2024

Senate Committees on Labor and Technology and Higher Education
Hawai'i State Capitol
415 South Beretania St
Honolulu, HI 96813

Honorable Labor and Technology Committee Chair Senator Henry Aquino and
Honorable Higher Education Committee Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim

SUBJECT: HOUSE BILL (HB) 2720 RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

On behalf of the National Education Association (NEA), it is with great pleasure that I once again express our steadfast support for Academic Labor United (ALU). As the largest labor organization in the country representing education employees, we have the capacity and expertise needed to support the continued development of Academic Labor United as a viable, effective, and sustainable representative of its members.

We support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of Graduate Workers to collectively bargain.

In November 2023, the graduate workers of Academic Labor United voted to affiliate with the National Education Association. We are honored to welcome ALU members into our 3-million-educator strong union. With NEA, Academic Labor United's graduate workers will find support, resources, and kinship to meet the unique needs of graduate workers, empowering them to establish a member-led, effective, and resilient graduate worker union.

The NEA will provide the following resources and assistance to Academic Labor United (ALU):

Legal Support: The NEA recently committed \$10,000 to support ALU through the legislative process and the establishment of their collective bargaining unit.

Digital Organizing Tools and Platforms: We will provide access to state-of-the-art digital organizing tools and platforms, empowering Academic Labor United to streamline communication, collaboration, and outreach efforts.

Training Programs: Our organization will conduct comprehensive training sessions focused on key areas of organizational development, including leadership development, building membership, creating enduring structures, and formulating a multi-year organizing plan aimed at ensuring robust membership engagement and support.

Financial Support for Conference Attendance: We are pleased to have hosted four members of Academic Labor United, including Chair Dianne Deauna, Treasurer Victoria Assad, Political Education Chair Kaiqing Su, and the College of Social Sciences Organizing Co-Chair Korey Wetherell at the NEA Higher Education Conference in Atlanta from March 14-17. This opportunity was a valuable professional

and networking experience which we hope will invigorate their members and inspire their leaders as they build their union in the coming months.

Budgeting Assistance: We will furnish sample budgets, training and offer guidance on financial management to aid in the effective allocation of resources and strategic financial planning, in accord with the standards in our *Guide to Best Financial Practices for Local Affiliates*.

Development of Governing Documents: Our team can provide guidance and support in the development of governing documents tailored to the unique needs and aspirations of Academic Labor United.

Nonprofit/Labor Union Status Establishment: We are committed to providing support throughout the process of establishing nonprofit status for Academic Labor United, in collaboration with the Hawai'i State Teacher's Association (HSTA), to ensure compliance with state and legal mandates.

Membership in NEA's Network: ALU members will become part of NEA's network of over three million members, gaining access to invaluable resources, advocacy efforts, and collaborative opportunities.

NEA Graduate Assistant Committee Membership: Members of Academic Labor United will have the opportunity to join the NEA Graduate Assistant Committee, thereby gaining access to peer expertise, support, and a platform for sharing best practices and insights with similar organizations representing graduate assistants at universities across the nation.

Support from NEA's Subject Matter Experts: NEA's staff includes experts in Graduate Assistant history, organizing and issues, applicable labor law, professional development, policy, day to day chapter management, and much more.

Access to NEA Grants: Once unit 16 is established and ALU officially affiliates with NEA, they will be able to apply for a range of NEA grants to support initiatives and projects aligned with our shared goals and priorities; including organizing and member engagement, professional development, and racial and social justice.

The National Education Association is committed to advancing the objectives of HB 2720 and fostering the growth and sustainability of Academic Labor United. Should you require further information or have any questions, please feel free to reach out to our Higher Education Organizing Team, led by Marcy Kamienecki who can be reached at mkamienecki@nea.org.

Sincerely,

Tom Israel
Senior Director, Center for Organizing and Affiliate Support
National Education Association



Academic Labor United

Testimony from Academic Labor United (ALU)

Attention: Senate Committees on Labor and Technology and Higher Education
Senator Henry Aquino, Chair
Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair

Re: Strong support for HB 2720 Relating to Collective Bargaining

Honorable representatives, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. **Academic Labor United (ALU) stands in strong support of this bill, particularly to revert it from HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate student workers to collectively bargain.** HD 3 currently simultaneously creates BU 16 for graduate student workers AND classifies them as a class of workers that “shall not be included in any bargaining unit nor entitled to coverage under Chapter 89-6”. We recognize that the Legislature has the power to place public employees in the exempt workers category as detailed in HRS 89-6. However, doing so for graduate student workers directly interferes with their constitutional right to collectively bargain under 89-6, which *UPW vs Yogi* states that the legislature cannot do (please see attachment expounding on *UPW vs Yogi*). In addition, having both amendments creates a legal contradiction - since graduate student workers were placed under the exempt category, barring them from coverage under Chapter 89-6, this removes their ability to file a petition to the HLRB for inclusion in BU 16. Also, since the law and the HLRB looks to the legislature to create new bargaining units first, having Unit 16 take effect only AFTER the HLRB certifies it is an abdication of legislative authority.

Graduate Assistants have come a long way to fight for their status as public employees and the right to unionize. Since the 1970s, graduate students in Hawai‘i have sought to collectively bargain, which was one of the founding missions of UH’s Graduate Student Organization (GSO), following the 60s-70s wave of graduate workers bargaining units and unions on the continent. Graduate Assistants from UH have been working to pass variations of this bill since 2012. In 2015, the bill arrived at the governor’s desk, but was vetoed. Exhausting all possible venues, graduate workers, including members of GSO, founded ALU in 2016, with a focus of gaining legal recognition. In 2019, the House Bill made it all the way to the Conference Committee but Speaker Scott Saiki did not assemble its counterpart House conferees. Bills were introduced in 2022 and 2023, but did not make it past their originating chamber. In all instances, the University of Hawai‘i has either submitted testimony opposing the bill or has chosen to not take a position on the matter, while failing to make substantive improvements to policies governing which tangibly uplift graduate student workers employment and working conditions.



Academic Labor United

Pursuing litigation against the 1972 decisions to exclude graduate assistants from collective bargaining has always been in the background, but it was not until 2021 when the lack of progress at the legislature prompted ALU leadership to work with Atty. Lance Collins to file suit against the Board of Regents, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board, and the state of Hawai'i. It sought “declaratory judgment from the Court that graduate assistants are public employees and thus have the right to organize for collective bargaining”. In April 2023, the Supreme Court decision (*Academic Labor United v. Board of Regents of the University of Hawai'i*) requested declaratory judgment from the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board (HLRB) to determine UH Graduate Assistants' status. After ALU filed a declaratory petition in July 2023, on January 4, 2024, HLRB determined that Graduate Assistants are public employees with the right to collectively bargain. These decisions in the past year have put graduate workers at a different place from any other legislative session.

To effectively move forward and unionize, graduate student workers need their own bargaining unit. Their unique position as students, workers, and workers who manage students make us vulnerable in the face of the university and our direct supervisors. While the recent HLRB decision ruled out the possibility of putting graduate students into any existing bargaining unit except for Units 3, 7, 8, or 13, these four CBUs do not fit graduate workers' needs and working conditions. Unit 7 is for UH Faculty, and is represented by the University of Hawai'i Professional Assembly. Graduate student workers do not fit into this bargaining unit as they would be in the same unit as their direct supervisors, creating conflict of interest, because GAs might have grievances against some faculty members. Unit 3 is for nonsupervisory employees in white collar positions, Unit 8 is for personnel of the University of Hawai'i and the community college system, and Unit 13 is for professional and scientific employees, all represented by the Hawai'i Government Employees Association. Unit 8 includes UH staff who directly process our employment papers. Unit 3 nor 13 does not cover teaching positions in any capacity. The scope and nature of the work done by graduate student workers at the University of Hawai'i, along with the requisite qualifications, training, and employment conditions necessitated by the nature of graduate teaching and research assistantships (e.g., graduate workers are exempt from any retirement and pension plan benefits which are fundamental to the contracts negotiated by all three units) all signify that graduate workers do not belong to any of the three units represented by HGEA. It is also noteworthy that both UHPA and HGEA have consistently supported graduate student workers belonging to their own unit since the beginning of legislative efforts by GSO and ALU in 2012.

Graduate Assistants manage diverse roles in the university. They constitute a committed learning community, conduct important research, and perform a substantial proportion of teaching and administrative duties. Graduate Teaching Assistants provide education to undergraduates by teaching their own classes and leading discussion sections, lectures, and labs. They also meet with undergraduate students during office hours to offer guidance and tutoring that greatly benefits students with an instructor's personal attention. Graduate Research Assistants often manage multiple independent projects, and perform the cutting-edge research



Academic Labor United

that has recently seen UH named in the top 1% of research institutions worldwide. Their research brings in millions of dollars in grants for the university, money and recognition these workers rarely receive. Other Graduate Assistants work in administrative offices and run key facilities, including the Athletics Department, Deans' offices, and student support services such as Native Hawaiian Student Services and the Center on Disability Studies. These services make our university more accessible and better serve our community. **In response to the question: “Can UH function without graduate assistants?”, UH administration representatives admitted, “No, absolutely not. Most research 1 universities could not function without graduate assistants.”**

While their labor is increasingly indispensable to the university, graduate workers face particular challenges and disadvantages, and lack recourse when faced with administrative decisions that jeopardize their well-being and safety in the workplace. Graduate Assistants have no formal protection guaranteeing their right to free inquiry and expression. The combination of stagnant wages well below the minimum cost of living, zero job security, and the absence of basic benefits like medical and parental leave puts UH at a disadvantage when recruiting and retaining graduate students. This has led to an ongoing TA crisis, which sees the university canceling classes due to a dearth of Graduate Assistants who can lead courses. As individuals, GAs stand little chance of success in demanding better treatment and compensation and addressing issues such as sexual harassment and workplace discrimination. The long history of failed attempts at improvements proves this to be true. When Dr. Julienne Maeda, the Interim Dean of the Graduate Division was asked about how the grievances she receives from graduate students are handled, she indicated that **“majority of them, 9 out of 10, do not want me to do anything because they are afraid of retaliation.”** GAs cannot rely on our employers to act in good faith nor in our best interest; they must be contractually obligated to do so. Our best hope for improving our own situations is to come together and collectively bargain for better working conditions and, more importantly, for a better university. In turn, we can make the university a more attractive workplace for prospective workers and increase the amount of filled positions needed by the university.

The University pays students a minimum of \$22,140 for a 9-month, and starting February 29, 2024 up to \$52,488 for an 11-month contract. The total number of possible annual salaries for a GA is 38 (given that there are 19 possible pay steps for either a 9-month or 11-month contract), and only 4 out of those 38 pay steps meet the ~\$46,000 recommended living wage for a single adult with no dependents for Hawai'i. There are no consistent recommended guidelines upon which these pay scales are administered, and UH administration leaves it up to departments to decide whether they have sufficient funds to cover any salary increases. This creates salary inequity across departments and campuses, an egregious example of which was in Spring 2022, UH Hilo was forced to cut a GA position in order to raise salaries for other GAs. Having a graduate student worker union would provide a legal framework for accountability such that the University would have to ensure equitable outcomes for all workers, regardless of campus whenever it implements any policy.



Academic Labor United

Additionally, the tuition waivers GAs receive are not income, in accordance with federal law. IRS Code(Title 26): “Gross income shall not include any qualified tuition reduction.” Section 117(d)(5) also specifies that this applies to “an individual who is a graduate student at an educational organization... who is engaged in teaching or research activities for such an organization.” Waivers cannot be used for living expenses such as rent, food, and transportation, among other basic needs.

UH representatives indicated that they have started implementing “climate surveys of graduate students in general”, and that in light of legislative testimony from 2023, have worked with GSO and ALU representatives to formulate a more effective GA complaint procedure. As of March 15th, 2024, no such climate survey has been implemented. The university’s efforts to work with ALU and GSO representatives consisted of one consultation meeting in Spring 2023. Academic Labor United has not heard from the administration since. It is clear that there is no consistent and methodical approach by the University to address graduate student worker grievances and improve outcomes for reporters of harm. By providing GAs with their own bargaining unit, the graduate worker community will be able to act as a check to the administration to ensure that graduate student workers have a legal framework by which to hold UH accountable.

It is important to highlight that even without legal recognition, ALU has been organizing graduate student workers and fighting for better living and working conditions. In 2020, when COVID-19 reached Hawai‘i, ALU started a hardship fund before UH did and organized a campaign for a sick leave policy. Later that year, ALU joined the ShaveICE coalition to push back against ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) and government policies regarding international students. In 2022, ALU successfully mobilized hundreds of GAs to demand a pay raise after GAs not receiving one since 2016, and a paid sick leave policy in tandem with GSO. Currently, ALU membership is at ~50% of ~1,400 Graduate Assistants of UH Mānoa, and we are continually working to increase this percentage. **ALU has a well-defined structure that can handle the responsibilities of representing GAs in our own collective bargaining unit.** Members of ALU have fought tirelessly over the past few years to unionize and as a result have created an appropriate structure to properly represent ourselves. ALU has our own constitution and by-laws. The Executive Committee (EC) of ALU is currently composed of the following: Chair, Vice Chairs (for Organizing), Recording Secretary, Secretary-Treasurer, and Chairs for Communications, Political Education, Undergraduate Organizing, International Students, General Grievance and Gender Equity. Our Finance Committee is working hard to ensure that ALU can meet the pecuniary needs of our organization to create a viable, long-lasting financial base, particularly through exploring ALU’s future as a nonprofit organization. ALU is working closely with NEA to model our budget after successfully functioning graduate student unions. ALU is diligently aligning our future funding structure with the current GA salary steps to make sure we can create a realistic and affordable dues plan. ALU is confident that members will be able and willing to contribute based on the minimum of \$902



Academic Labor United

per year that UH currently requires all GAs to pay already. GAs would rather contribute to an organization that directly represents them and their needs.

This year, ALU also formed a Constitutional Revision Coalition to update our by-laws that were last revised in 2017. The aim is to revise our core constitution to better reflect the responsibilities and rights that members of ALU have within our graduate student union, as well as adapt existing union constitutions from the NEA, HSTA, and other existing graduate student unions to fit our needs through a care-centered approach. ALU would also like to highlight the formation of a Legislative Committee, which actively meets with legislators and allies to discuss relevant bills and devise strategies for Committee hearings and shows that we are taking feedback from the state seriously with the gravity it deserves.

Our Organizing Committee, which comprises a significant portion of the Executive Committee, has a structure similar to a typical union and liaison roles resembling the stewards in different colleges and departments. The Organizing Chairs include representatives from the College of Arts, Languages and Letters, College of Engineering, College of Natural Sciences, College of Social Sciences, School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, At Large Organizing Chairs (for UH Mānoa) and UH Hilo. This year to strengthen our Organizing Committee, we've developed Alaka'i roles (literally "a road that guides", with the idea that guidance comes not from persons directing it, but from the collective actions of people who leave their trace on the land) within as many departments as possible. The Alaka'i are similar to the shop steward structure found in most labor unions, and, as of creating the roles in ALU in late January 2024, ALU has brought on 15 new Alaka'i in 14 unique departments. ALU is bolstering our base of graduate students and continuously working to create an organizational structure that will outlast the term of any individual graduate assistant.

By Fall 2023, it had become clear that ALU needed support and guidance from a larger, more established union in order to grow and expand to meet its members' needs. Over the course of three weeks (from September 27 to October 12), a series of meet and greets were scheduled with representatives from the National Education Association, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. Each union was allotted two days in order for union representatives to meet ALU members, discuss their overlying structure, and provide context as to how they could assist ALU's unionization efforts. ILWU decided to withdraw from participating in the affiliation process, given the trajectory of the legal and political status of ALU's unionization efforts. To provide a summary of all the information received from both NEA and AFSCME, the Executive Committee worked closely with the Union Affiliation Committee to produce a Voting Guide that was then distributed to all ALU members, and several talk stories and information sessions were also held so members could freely discuss all considerations. Ultimately, ALU members determined, by the majority of votes cast, that the National Education Association was the best fit for our needs.



Academic Labor United

Since ALU's affiliation with NEA, NEA has pledged in writing support for our unionization efforts in various ways. Critical for the development of our own, unique collective bargaining unit, the NEA has offered support for budgeting assistance, establishing nonprofit/labor union status, and support from NEA's subject matter experts in graduate assistant history, applicable legal advice, and day-to-day chapter management. For the growth and vitality of ALU, NEA has also pledged support for organizational training programs, financial support for conference attendance, development of governing documents, membership to NEA's network, and access to NEA grants. These resources will help ALU with our ability to grow and remain an effective body to protect our graduate workers in the UH system. HSTA, which is an affiliate of NEA, has promised support for ALU as a potential sister-union. Specifically, HSTA has begun work to secure legal representation and advice to help ALU become a nonprofit labor union under Hawai'i law. HSTA's experience with the local political landscape is an invaluable resource and greatly appreciated. ALU is extremely grateful for the guidance, support, and aloha that the NEA and HSTA have shown us throughout our organizing endeavors. **With our commitment and other unions' support, we have shown that Graduate Assistants are ready and are in urgent need of unionization and our own bargaining unit. We strongly urge that HB 2720 HD 3 be reverted to HD 2. The time is now.**

Respectfully,

Dianne Deauna,
Chair, Academic Labor United

February 6, 2024

Academic Labor United
<alu@aluhawaii.org>

Dear Academic Labor United,

You requested that I answer the following question: Whether the legislature may lawfully "temporarily plac[e] the graduate assistants in HRS 89-6, the exclusionary statute".

The short answer is no: the legislature cannot deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining even temporarily. Such an act would be unconstitutional and unlawful.

In 1968, the voters of the State of Hawai'i adopted Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i State Constitution recognizing a constitutional right for persons in public employment to organize for collective bargaining. Until this right was ratified as part of the constitution, it was the legislature's prerogative whether to grant rights to organize for collective bargaining to public employees.

In 1999, the legislature passed Act 100 which prohibited the state and public worker unions from negotiating over "cost items" including wages, hours, and contributions to the employee health fund. Public workers filed suit challenging the law as violating their right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.

The Hawai'i Supreme Court ruled in 2002 in United Public Workers v. Yogi, 101 Hawai'i 46, 62 P.3d 189 (2002) that the phrase "as provided by law" in Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution was intended to confer on the legislature the power to regulate the scope of collective bargaining not to confer on the legislature the power to grant and deny the right of public employees to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining altogether.

In United Public Worker v. Yogi, the Hawai'i Supreme Court unanimously agreed in the three opinions of the Court: "[w]hile the legislature is given broad discretion pursuant to article XIII, section 2, the language 'as provided by law' does not give the legislature unfettered discretion to infringe upon the core principles of collective bargaining." Yogi, 101 Hawai'i at 54, 62 P.3d at 198 (Nakayama, J, concurring majority opinion). "The legislature did not have the constitutional authority to enact a law that in effect completely abrogated the right granted under article XIII,

section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution.” Id., 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Nakayama, J., “concurring” majority opinion).

Yogi reiterated this constitutional interpretation throughout the opinions. “[T]he core of Article XIII, Section 2 of the Hawai'i Constitution, inasmuch as relevant history confirms that the right to organize and bargain collectively was to remain inviolate[.]” Id., 101 Hawai'i at 55, 62 P.3d at 199 (Acoba, J., concurring). “[T]he framers were not in favor of granting the legislature the ultimate power to deny the right to organize for the purpose of collectively bargaining[.]” Id., 101 Hawai'i at 51, 62 P.3d at 195 (Ramil, J., decision of the court). “[T]he framers did not intend to grant the legislature absolute discretion to take away the right to collectively bargain altogether[.]” Id. (Ramil, J.). “Granting the lawmakers absolute discretion to define the scope of collective bargaining would also produce the absurd result of nullifying the 'right to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining.” Id., 101 Hawai'i at 52, 62 P.3d at 196 (Ramil, J.) “[T]he intent and object of the framers who adopted article XII, section 2 was to extend to public employees similar rights to collective bargaining previously adopted for private employees under article XII, section 1.” Id., 101 Hawai'i at 53, 62 P.3d at 197 (Ramil, J.). As stated in all opinions of the Yogi court, the legislature lacks the power to completely abrogate the right granted under Article XIII, § 2 whether it does it to all public employees or only certain classes.

For these reasons, the legislature cannot deprive graduate assistants of their constitutional right to organize for purposes of collective bargaining even temporarily (as Act 100 intended to do). Such an act would be unconstitutional and unlawful.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me should you have any other questions.

Very truly yours,
LAW OFFICE OF LANCE D COLLINS

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance D. Collins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and a distinct "D" at the end.

LANCE D COLLINS



HAWAII GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION

AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO

RANDY PERREIRA, Executive Director • Tel: 808.543.0011 • Fax: 808.528.0922

The Thirty-Second Legislature, State of Hawaii
The Senate
Committee on Labor and Technology
Committee on Higher Education

Testimony by
Hawaii Government Employees Association

March 18, 2024

H.B. 2720, H.D. 3 — RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

The Hawaii Government Employees Association, AFSCME Local 152, AFL-CIO wishes to provide comments on the purpose and intent of H.B. 2720, H.D. 3 which Exempts graduate assistants from collective bargaining until they petition the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Board determines the graduate assistants are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit, at which point a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and its community college system will be established.

In-light of the recent Hawaii Labor Relations Board decision, we find it necessary and appropriate for this group of employees to establish their own bargaining unit so that they can bargain collectively, just like many other public employee groups.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on H.B. 2720, H.D. 3.

Respectfully submitted,

Randy Perreira
Executive Director

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:24:28 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Elizabeth Yen Tzu LIEW | Testifying for Academic Labour Union | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees.

My name is Elizabeth Liew and I am a graduate student and Graduate Assistant at the Asian Studies Department. This fall, I will be a Teaching Assistant supporting students studying Southeast Asia in the Asian Studies Department.

I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.



HOUSE BILL 2720, HD3, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

MARCH 18, 2024 · LBT/HRE HEARING

POSITION: Support.

RATIONALE: The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Education Caucus **supports** HB 2720, HD3, relating to collective bargaining, which exempts graduate assistants from collective bargaining until they petition the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Board determines the graduate assistants are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit, at which point a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and its community college system will be established.

There is a power in a union. Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

They couldn't be more wrong. **Collective bargaining is a human right.** Unionized employees' compensation and work protections, moreover, are essential to creating an upwardly mobile middle class and continually increasing economic prosperity. As economist Paula Voos of Rutgers University School of Management and Labor Relations notes, "It is no accident that the prosperity and consumer boom of the 1950s—a period of unprecedented middle-class expansion, broad business growth, increased home ownership, rising consumer spending, and the shared

expectation that a college education was within the reach of everyone and that the lives of our children would be better than our own—followed the greatest sustained expansion of unionization in American history.”

Unsurprisingly, decreasing American middle-class incomes and the rapidly widening wealth gap in our country parallel a significant decline in union membership. It is imperative, then, that we promote higher productivity by strengthening labor-management relations. Through a union, employees have a means to engage with management about workplace problems, inefficient processes, unfair work conditions, and unsupportive compensation. Unions also reduce employee turnover and increase the retention of highly experienced employees, creating circumstances that favor professional development and mutual trust in the workplace.

Graduate assistants are employees and, thus, guaranteed the right to collectively bargain with university management, a fact that both the Hawai'i Supreme Court and Hawai'i Labor Relations Board have upheld within the last year. In providing instruction to students and research that expands our society's knowledge base, graduate students tirelessly toil on behalf of the university community, often under fear of retaliation because of a lack of organizing power in resisting exploitation. Graduate student assistants are short-term positions. Yet, the duration of graduate positions only heightens the urgency of establishing collective bargaining protections, as temporary employees too often fall prey to employers who exploit the precarious nature of these positions and assume student workers will simply “deal with the pain and move on.”

Appallingly, UH graduate assistants currently earn approximately \$20,000 per year on average, a number that has not significantly increased in almost two decades. At the sunrise of 2019, that amount carried over \$6,000 less purchasing power than it did fourteen years ago *before* adjusting for Hawai'i's high cost of living. **It is not even half of what MIT's living wage calculator calculates as a living wage for a graduate assistant working in the islands.** Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” The same is true with basic civil rights, including the rights to freely associate and bargain for fair pay and work conditions, which are constantly under assault by a corporate mindset that puts dollars before democracy.

Kris Coffield · Chairperson, DPH Education Caucus · (808) 679-7454 · kriscoffield@gmail.com



TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII LABOR CAUCUS

SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY
and HIGHER EDUCATION · MARCH 18, 2024

HB 2720, HD3, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i Labor Caucus **supports** HB 2720, HD3, exempts graduate assistants from collective bargaining until they petition the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board and the Board determines the graduate assistants are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit, at which point a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawai'i and its community college system will be established.

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TESTIMONY FROM THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF HAWAII

SENATE COMMITTEES ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY and HIGHER EDUCATION

MARCH 18, 2024

HB 2720, HD3, RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Democratic Party of Hawai'i **supports** HB 2720, HD3, relating to collective bargaining. Pursuant to the “Economic Justice and Labor” section of the official Democratic Party of Hawai'i platform, the party believes “that all workers have the right to form a union to collectively bargain with employers on their behalf. We support the efforts of unions to protect and advocate for workers. We support anti-discrimination protections in the workplace. We support policies that reduce racial, gender, and other disparities in pay.”

There is a power in a union.

Today, political pundits prognosticate about the possible onslaught of austerity facing our nation. Many of these same pundits believe that labor unions are an impediment to economic prosperity, arguing that collective bargaining sets wages above what the free market demands.

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Mahalo nui loa,

Kris Coffield
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 679-7454
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Abby Simmons
Co-Chair, Legislative Committee
(808) 352-6818
abbyalana808@gmail.com

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 9:00:01 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Mike Golojuch | Testifying for Rainbow Family 808 | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Rainbow Family 808 supports HB2720. Please pass this bill.

Mike Golojuch, Sr., Secretary/Board Member

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 5:20:06 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Michael Golojuch Jr | Testifying for Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

The Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i; Hawai'i's oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization fully supports HB 2720 HD 3.

We hope you all will support this important piece of legislation.

Mahalo nui loa,

Michael Golojuch, Jr. (he/him)
Chair and SCC Representative
Stonewall Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i



UNIVERSITY OF
HAWAII
STUDENT CAUCUS

Date 03/18/2024

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Relating to HB 2720 HD 3

Aloha Chair Kim, Vice Chair Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

Mahalo for the opportunity to provide testimony.

The University of Hawai'i Student Caucus (UHSC) is formally authorized to serve as a system-wide association of all University of Hawai'i campus student governments, representing approximately 46,400 students across the 10 campuses of the UH System.

The UHSC unanimously shares a position of strong support for HB 2720 as written in HD 2, requesting the bill to be amended as such.

Graduate Assistants (GA) have a direct impact on over 14,000 undergraduate students in the UH system who depend on the GAs to instruct or provide multifaceted support. The quality of work and life of a GA is directly tied to the quality of education received by the undergraduate students and by extension the quality of education provided by the University of Hawaii System. The people of Hawaii are all invested in the success of the University of Hawaii System.

The HLRB ruled as of Jan 4th, 2024 that GA's are PUBLIC EMPLOYEES, who have a right to collectively bargain. Without the ability to Collectively Bargain the GA's are at risk of exploitation. GAs are STUDENTS and pursue an education whilst providing a service to the University of Hawaii System. GAs should be properly represented so that they do not have to choose between struggling to keep the lights on and getting an education.

Quality GAs are a gateway to supplement the staffing and mitigating the impact of hiring shortages plaguing the University of Hawaii System. The establishment of a new bargaining unit would allow GAs to further assist the critically understaffed portions of the University of Hawaii System. This issue is of particular importance to the Student Caucus as understaffed services cause a decrease in the quality of educational experiences for the students of the University of Hawaii System.

Sincerely,

Ronald Sturges, Domineque Bonifacio
Legislative Action Committee, UH Student Caucus

1733 Donaghho Road
Kuykendall 716
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96822

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 7:22:01 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|------------------|--------------|--------------------|-----------|
| Miles Drazkowski | Individual | Support | In Person |

Comments:

I'm Miles Drazkowski, a TA from Civil, Environmental, and Construction Engineering, and I support HB 2720 HD2 as one that upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

I count myself fortunate to stand with my peers as a graduate student worker. As such, there are a multitude of reasons why I think this bill deserves your support and attention.

As part of my testimony, I want to lend my voice to a group that is particularly vulnerable to the kinds of issues my peers have mentioned, international students, and particularly international students with families and children.

My college, by a large measure, is composed of international students. These are workers that have largely left their families and their countries behind, just for the opportunity provided by a graduate degree.

Their sacrifice and dedication make them particularly susceptible to workplace abuse. As we sit here, deciding whether or not workers deserve their rights, these workers are working under conditions that anyone can see are intolerable.

In my short time here, every single one of the international students in my cohort has voiced to me multiple situations in which the demands of the work far exceeded the job description. And yet, they have all voiced to me concern that reporting these situations would put their job, and by extension their VISAs and their futures, in jeopardy.

A bargaining unit and by extension, a union, would provide a safe forum to report workplace abuse and protect those most vulnerable.

Whether it is simply that as public employees it is our right to collectively bargain, or whether it is the fact that our contributions are invaluable to not only the university, but academia, the intellectual future of our given fields, and our wider communities, or whether it is the direct effects that we will have on the lives of our students and colleagues, not to mention the lives of everyone that calls these islands home; we deserve better. We deserve our rights.

We have been asked, why make the choice to be a graduate student worker?

In my field of engineering, employment that would simultaneously offer me the flexibility and financial resources that could allow me to pursue a graduate degree, doesn't exist. Hence, I've sought employment as a Teaching Assistant.

In Fall 2023, out of the 1,536 graduate student workers, 579 were Teaching Assistants. If TAs average 20 students, that means around 11,600 undergraduates have been directly affected by our labor. The UH Manoa undergraduate population is approximately 14,500, that's almost 80% of the undergraduate population attending classes that require TAs to function. And that is only considering one class. In most cases, undergrads take multiple classes involving TAs.

The students that we teach, the students that I teach, will wind up as the engineers in your Department of Transportation, your Board of Water Supply, your Clean Water Branch.

The benefits that [students and society reap](#) are, in large part, due to our labor. And yet, the compensation and working conditions offered to TAs has led to hiring shortages for example those in the Physics Department and School of Life Sciences. As a result, sections of required classes are canceled, student progress delayed.

And even still, I'm more privileged than most. I'm able to take on overload positions to augment my income despite which remains crucially and distressingly below a Honolulu living wage (MIT's published [living wage for Hawai'i](#) is currently at \$47,000)

I think that I have a pretty good imagination and yet, even I, can't imagine any valid argument that would preclude graduate workers from forming our own collective bargaining unit.

It is the moral imperative of any equitable society that workers be able to form a union and bargain for their collective welfare.

Any doubt of our ability to organize and to handle the challenge of unionization is unfounded as we have demonstrated time and time again our willingness and ability to organize. After all, we may be students but we are also working professionals. We make meaningful contributions to our respective fields and even prior to attending our graduate course of study, the majority of us have spent years employed in our fields.

Being able to collectively bargain in our own unit, will allow graduate workers to improve our living and working conditions. Inevitably, this will result in hiring from a more diverse and typically underrepresented background, bringing not only monetary value but intellectual and cultural contributions to the university and Hawai'i as a whole.

Aloha and terveh. My name is Sara Maaria Saastamoinen, and my pronouns are she and they. I am a Ph.D. student in Political Science in my third year as a student and graduate worker at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I live here in town in Ala Moana, and I am the constituent of Representative Scott Saiki in the House and Senator Sharon Moriwaki in the Senate. As a graduate student worker, I **fully support House Bill 2720**, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. I urge you to join me with your unequivocal support.

I wanted to start by expressing my passion and appreciation for the representatives who brought forth this bill, the lawyers who have worked with Academic Labor Union organizers for years, and of course, my fellow graduate students who are all working to secure our right to a union that can support graduate student workers — who are here today to speak with you, taking time away from the many responsibilities we carry as students, scholars, teachers, researchers, parents, friends, caregivers, and citizens to ask you to listen.

For years now, graduate students have been denied our right to collectively bargain our contracts. This impacts not only us graduate students but also the future leaders we educate, so supporting graduate workers should be one of the most crucial issues for this legislature. This academic year alone, I am teaching more than 45 undergraduate students who will be the leaders of Hawai'i. For the past four semesters, as the sole instructor who entirely devises her own curriculum, I have worked for the state by selecting thought-provoking readings and creating accessible and engaging assignments, solely grading all students' in-class and written assignments and providing robust written feedback, devising lectures and in-class activities to help students both digest and weave connections between selected course materials and the real-world issues we face in Hawai'i and globally, and fulfilling numerous other responsibilities expected of faculty, such as participating in surveys to secure funding for UHM through grants, writing reference letters for students to study abroad programs, graduate school and other degree programs, jobs during and after college, and more.

Here are some snippets of what my students have to say about my teaching:

- I believe Sara did a good job furthering and challenging students' thinking and from what I have heard other students say, this class has changed the way we think about water and our relationality. I felt like Sara cared more about what the students wanted out of the class and how we learn best than what I have experienced from other instructors.
- To Sara: The passion you have for this class was inspiring. You made this class something I wanted to attend and also to succeed in. You taught me more than water politics. You taught me to think about more than the living things.
- Sara is incredible, literally one of the best if not the best teacher I have ever encountered. I cried to my mom after going to office hours one day because of how incredible she is.

- Excellent mind-opening course that had me grow so much academically and in my general thinking of the world. As an added positive note Sara is the best professor I have had in the whole past two years I have been in college! She had very extensive knowledge about the topics covered in the class as well [as] any other topic brought up. She was very good at giving detailed feedback and really seemed as if she was there to help all the students succeed and grow!
- To Sara: I want you to know that you are the most caring and intelligent teacher I have ever encountered. You are why I go to school. It is teachers like you who change lives.

For all of this work and even with rave reviews from students, the state pays me poverty wages. The state is not even paying me half of what a living wage is for Honolulu County. As the instructor of your children, your future leaders, I make \$22,000 a year: to pay rent, to cover utilities, to feed myself, not to mention healthcare, clothing, or any paid time off to get to rest.

We should be supporting those who are cultivating our brightest minds, instead of leaving teachers to struggle every month to make ends meet. As public employees, we deserve to form a union to collectively bargain for working conditions that are fair, equitable, safe, healthy, and which serve the future of Hawai'i—not its underpaid and overworked past.

Without us, the University of Hawai'i would not have the world-class teaching and research that it is known for; without us, the State of Hawai'i would not have a Research One institution to call its own. I ask you to **pass HB 2720 urgently** and to listen to the voices of Graduate Assistants who have been fighting for years to secure our right to unionize. Mahalo nui and passibo.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 1:55:03 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|----------------|
| Noelle Iati | Individual | Support | In Person |

Comments:

Aloha, senators. I'm Noelle, a teaching assistant in the American Studies Department at UH Mānoa. I strongly support HB 2720. All workers deserve the right to collectively bargain, and as a graduate assistant, the ability to collectively bargain will have a material impact on my life. HB 2720 upholds graduate workers' constitutional rights.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/14/2024 3:56:36 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Will Caron | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I support HB2720. This is LONG overdue.

The Hawai'i Labor Relation Board and the Hawai'i Supreme Court have ruled and upheld that graduate students are employees. There should be no further discussion needed.

Graduate students have the same right to collectively bargain that any other group of workers has, period.

Chair Henry Aquino
Vice Chair Sharon Moriwaki

Senate Committee on Labor & Technology

Chair Donna Kim
Vice Chair Michelle Kidani

Senate Committee on Higher Education

Monday, March 18, 2024
3:00 PM

**TESTIMONY IN STRONG SUPPORT OF HB2720 HD3 RELATING TO
COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WITH AMENDMENTS**

Aloha Chair(s) Aquino & Kim, Vice Chair(s) Moriwaki & Kidani, Member(s) of the Senate Committee on Labor & Technology and Senate Committee on Higher Education,

My name is Jun Shin. I am a union service worker as well as a labor and social justice activist, testifying as an individual in **STRONG SUPPORT** of **HB2720 HD3**, Relating to Collective Bargaining **WITH AMENDMENTS**.

Graduate assistants were some of the best instructors I ever had during my time at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa as an Ethnic Studies and American Studies double major. I had several classes where a graduate assistant was either the primary instructor or taught alongside the professor. As instructors who were working towards completing higher education related to those classes, I really learned a lot and deeply appreciated their passion and dedication. Those same graduate workers were willing to serve as tutors, helping me when I struggled with class or had questions. I also found them to be very understanding and empathetic when I had to deal with life’s curveballs, given that they were also students and/or were closer to us in life experience.

Graduate assistants like my instructors are fundamentally important to the University of Hawai‘i and its community colleges. They are instructors, tutors, researchers, administrative assistants, even unofficial counselors and so much more, forming the backbone of Hawai‘i’s higher education system. Like all workers, they deserve respect on the job and should not be scraping by and struggling to barely survive while working and studying. Graduate assistants have been putting in the work of building their union for years now and need your support to officially form their own collective bargaining unit as public workers. I support AMENDING HB2720 House

Draft 3 to House Draft 2, because it upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to bargain collectively.

I also support the establishment of a separate collective bargaining unit, Unit 16 for graduate student workers for these reasons:

1. Graduate student workers cannot be categorized into either just instructional (Unit 7) or just administrative, professional, technical, or scientific (Unit 8 & Unit 13). There are cases of overlap in specifications.
2. In the event that graduate student workers are placed under Unit 7, they would be in the same bargaining unit as their supervisors.
3. Unique among the University of Hawai'i and community college workplaces, the composition of the graduate student workforce will consistently change over time. That requires specific union representation.

A union will allow graduate assistants to have a vehicle to fight for higher wages and better benefits. It will allow graduate assistants to be able to have a protected voice in how their workplace, the University of Hawai'i is being run. It would create an avenue for graduate assistants to address critical issues in the workplace like equal pay, sexual harassment, abuse of authority, and discrimination in its many forms.

Please **PASS** House Bill 2720 HD3 as **AMENDED** out of your committees and allow for graduate student workers to enter into workplace negotiations in equal footing with their employers.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Jun Shin,
State House District 23 | State Senate District 12
Cell: 808-255-6663
Email: junshinbusiness729@gmail.com

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 7:47:49 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Olivia Meyer | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees, I'm Olivia Meyer, a graduate student from Geography and Environment, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 back to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

GAs are public employees, as classified by the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board. We deserve the right to collectively bargain and to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature will grant us this opportunity to do what many other unionized graduate assistants across the US have been doing for the past 50 years. I appreciate your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:06:04 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Daniela Escontrela | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Daniela Escontrela, a graduate student and GA in the marine biology graduate program, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:08:51 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monica Orillo | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Monica Orillo, a graduate student from the UH Asian Studies Department, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:14:08 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| John Nightingale | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is John Nightingale and I am a TA in the Geography department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:17:57 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Wiwik Dharmiasih | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Wiwik Dharmiasih, a graduate student from Department of Geography and Environment, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:21:15 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Clemens Mayer | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees.

I'm Clemens Mayer, a graduate student and graduate assistant from the department of Linguistics at UH Mānoa, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

Mahalo for giving the opportunity to testify.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:37:09 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kyle Conner | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

To Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees, thank you very much for the opportunity to submit testimony on behalf of HB2720 HD3.

My name is Kyle Conner, a PhD candidate in the Oceanography Department at UH Mānoa. I live in Mānoa Valley and am represented in the House by Rep. Andrew Takuya Garrett and in the Senate by Sen. Carol Fukunaga. I support reverting HB2720 HD3 back to HD2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 9:53:40 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ashley Clark | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Ashley Clark and I am a research assistant in the Geography department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 10:08:47 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Olivia Jarvis | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees,

My name is Olivia Jarvis, a graduate student at the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. I live in Hilo and am represented in the House by Rep. Richard Onishi and Sen. Lorraine Inouye in the Senate. I’m writing in support of reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

I’ve been a student at UH for the past six years and in my second year of the Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science (TCBES) Graduate Program. To support myself through graduate school, I’m also working as a graduate teaching assistant for the Geography and Environmental Science Department. I assist two courses in geographic information systems by holding office hours for students, grading assignments, and maintaining the student computer lab by updating and licensing the softwares. Some of my hours are also dedicated to supporting the TCBES program by promoting seminar series talks, managing department vehicle rentals, writing the semesterly newsletter, editing the program website, and maintaining the program email. This position allows me to work 20 hours a week, but sometimes I work beyond these hours to keep up with the work that needs to be completed. To fulfill my degree requirements, I am taking courses and working on my thesis project that is focused on detecting invasive species in aerial imagery using machine learning. My work is helping biocontrol efforts to reduce the spread of invaders and protect native ecosystems. Despite all this hard work in and out of the classroom, other graduate assistants and myself often find it difficult to manage living in Hawai‘i on our current UH salaries.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address these concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai‘i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai‘i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 10:57:38 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Lehua | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is Lehua Matsumoto, I am a graduate student worker in the Department of American Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

I am a second year graduate student, and I have led undergraduate discussion sections for two different classes, coming up with entertaining ways for students to engage with the material and ensuring that they are learning something from our coursework. In the last year, I have worked with our department as an Editorial Assistant for American Quarterly, ensuring that our department maintains its exemplary status within the field of American Studies.

I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 because I know that the stress of graduate school should not be compounded by the stress of unforgiving labor practices and expectations, including an overwhelming workload, insufficient pay, and employment uncertainty, and collective bargaining is a powerful method of ensuring that will not happen. This bill will allow grad students like myself to address these concerns and communicate directly with our employers, the State of Hawaii and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions.

I hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain our rights, similar to how other graduate student organizations on the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years.

Thank you for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:14:28 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Kyle K Kajihiro | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Kim and Senator Aquino. Mahalo for the opportunity to testify. My name is Kyle Kajihiro. I am a faculty in the Ethnic Studies department. I support HB2720 in its previous HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. I urge you to affirm this right for graduate student workers. Graduate assistants perform crucial labor that allow our university to serve the community. They deserve the same rights to collective bargaining as other workers. Please revert HB2720 HD3 to its earlier HD2 form. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:24:06 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Kaiqing Su | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is Kaiqing Su. I am a Graduate Assistant at the Political Science Department at UH Mānoa, and a first-year student studying the politics of infrastructure in the Pacific. I am also an international student coming from Guangzhou, China. And I feel extremely grateful for the opportunity to pursue my passion and study in Hawai'i. I support revising HB 2720's current amended form to one that upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. As an international student worker, I am disadvantaged in the workplace due to my citizenship and visa status. Joining a legally-recognized union is one of the few rights we have to protect ourselves. Delaying our right to collectively bargain make our conditions in the U.S. even more unsustainable.

International workers like me often face unique challenges. In my first year at UH as an MA student, I had the opportunity to get a GAship outside of my department in Political Science. Because of the limited venue of income (i.e. this part-time GAship is the only job we can take, and any other jobs will be illegal under our student visa status), I especially cherish this GAship. Since this was my first GAship, I didn't know what to expect, how to negotiate, and how to keep my boundaries. My eagerness to do my job well and the fear of losing it also made me vulnerable when my supervisor made requests such as working after hours, even after midnight. Sometimes I was handed tasks that I was capable of doing but weren't listed in the job descriptions, such as TAing a class that was outside of the College of Social Sciences (i.e. outside my own expertise). I lost control of my time and got extremely anxious whenever a task was assigned to me. I wasn't able to do well in my school work and was always near the edge of an emotional breakdown. I couldn't address this directly to my supervisor because I sincerely respect them and support their work as a student, but I didn't know how to confront them as an employee. It wasn't until my friend who was also an international GA noticed how unwell I was doing that I realized I shouldn't be taking all the blame, and I have the right to say no to unreasonable asks. I realized how important it is to have a community of workers together, to share our stories, to heal, to support each other, and to see the blind spots that are unacknowledged because we were immersed in unhealthy relationships and feeling utterly alone. I also wish I had learned how to negotiate my job expectations and communicate my needs instead of relying on the mercy of individual Supervisors.

In 2023, when I was deciding between two PhD programs--one at the University of Minnesota, the other here, at UH Mānoa--I almost chose the former, because the University of Minnesota has a guaranteed funding of 5 years (instead of having to apply for GAship and be sacred of job instability every year), and their graduate students were just freshly unionized. But I decided to stay. Not only because I appreciate intellectual discussion, the educational environment, community in Hawai'i, but because I am committed to building a union for fellow UH GAs, and in the future, hopefully, lecturers and post-docs. All of us made the economically unwise decision to be here because we are passionate. After all, we want to foster something beautiful together. We are not alone, and we are determined to get our union together. Please make our decisions worth it.

In the past few months actively participating in Academic Labor United as part of the Executive Committee, I felt both challenged by the vision of unionization and nourished by my fellow workers who are fighting together. We all believe that only by having a union and our own bargaining unit that our studies can really excel and our potential to contribute to the university can be maximized. We greatly appreciate the opportunity for this hearing, and we urge you to give GAs an opportunity to collectively build a better future. Mahalo nui loa.

Respectfully,

Kaiqing Su

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:27:35 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Kira M Webster | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Kira Webster and I am a GA in the Geography & Environment department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:35:15 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Krisna Suryanata | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is Krisna Suryanata and I am a faculty member at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I strongly support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:42:27 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jack McKee | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

My name is Jack McKee, I'm a research assistant at the mathematics department at the University of Hawai'i writing in support of HB2720, however, I believe the amendment that specifically excludes graduate students from collective bargaining should be removed.

I live on Dole street, less than a block from the university. Like many of my peers, I live in substandard housing that is not up to building codes, with roommates. Before my girlfriend moved in, even my small hotbox of a room was eating up almost half of my monthly pay. Many of us are on food stamps. I manage food costs by making big pots of stew for the week.

Especially when adjusted for cost of living, UH has some of the worst pay for graduate assistants in the country, and there is almost no uniformity in the amount of work -- usually grading, teaching, programming, and other tasks unrelated to our studies -- that different assistants do. We are supposed to all do 20 hours per week but many people put in nights and weekends to get their work done. This is work that brings grant money and high reputation to the university and benefits the people of Hawai'i at large through education. I, for instance, have done much of the programming work on PISALE for the past few years, a project that has attracted over a million dollars in grant funding. This is all on top of being a PhD student, which is practically a full-time job in itself and is extremely stressful.

I came to grad school because I want to do something with my life. I want to contribute somehow to society as a scientist and as an educator. I moved here with the intent of staying and using my expertise locally. When we are paid like this, and can't meaningfully negotiate with the university to change it, we are basically being told that this dream is not valuable. I support this bill because it would give us a chance to change that.

Thank you for considering my testimony.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 11:56:12 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Angela Amantite | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Angela Amantite and I am a GA in the Institute of Syustainability and Resilience. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 12:03:33 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jie Lin Chia | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Jie Lin Chia and I am a GA in the Office of Student Academic Success. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 12:44:41 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Yoko Uyehara | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees.

My name is Yoko Uyehara and I am a community supporter in the Geography and Environment department at the University of Hawaii. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 1:19:49 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Amanda Lambert | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Amanda Lambert and I am a community supporter in the Geography and Environment department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 1:28:51 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Karen Lee | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Karen Lee and I am a graduate student worker from the Department of Geography and Environment at UH Mānoa. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 2:21:00 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Hannah Freiin von Hammerstein | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Hannah Freiin von Hammerstein and I am a GA in the Geography & Environment department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 2:36:18 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jocelyn B Brody | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Jocelyn Brody, I'm a PhD student in American Studies, and I'm a Teaching Assistant for a class called American Studies 220, Intro to Indigenous Studies.

I live in Kapahulu right near the Leonard's and my senator is Les Ihara, Jr. and my House Representative is Bertrand Kobayashi. I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain

I am a first year PhD student and working hard to start publishing, to go to my classes, to apply to conferences, and to work as a teaching assistant. I worry that because of how little I make as a teaching assistant I will have to take on another job to make ends meet which would mean slowing my progress towards my degree. I currently have 37 students that I'm working to grade, instruct, and support, last semester I had 40. This means that I'm working really hard for the University but not making enough money to support myself.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 3:55:37 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Sophia Somerscales | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Sophia Somerscales and I'm a TA in the Geography and Environment department at UH. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

I'm currently a Teaching Assistant for two courses in the Geography department, where I hold a lab for 80 students each week to provide in-person support for class concepts, help on assignments, and technology troubleshooting. I also schedule additional one-on-one meetings and am the first point of contact for all student emails throughout the week.

This role is 20 hours a week and while I enjoy the work that I do, the pay is simply not enough to cover living expenses in Hawai'i considering I'm also a full-time student working on a master's thesis research project. This bill is crucial to negotiating better working conditions for graduate student workers. Mahalo for your time and consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 4:40:45 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Abigail Hawkins | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Abigail Hawkins and I am a graduate student in the UH Manoa Geography and Environment department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 4:52:22 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Josiah Murphy | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha. My name is Josiah Murphy, and I am a 4th-year graduate student at UHM. I am testifying in favor of HB2720. I believe the initiative in this bill will provide tangible benefit to the welfare of graduate students in the UH system.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/15/2024 8:15:54 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Aree Worawongwasu | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees,

My name is Aree Worawongwasu. I am the International Students Committee Chair and Constitutional Revision Committee Co-Chair of Academic Labor United, and I also serve on the Gender Justice Committee, Communications Committee, and Political Education Committee of our union. For the past three years, I have worked as a Graduate Assistant in the American Studies department of the University of Hawai‘i, where I am pursuing my PhD. I work hard, I enjoy teaching, and I have even been nominated for the prestigious Frances Davis Award for Undergraduate Teaching. I have taught 40 students in two class sections in almost every semester I have worked at the University of Hawai‘i, including a writing-intensive course I designed entirely by myself as the Instructor Of Record last Spring. As much as I love teaching and research, UH simply does not pay us a living wage in order for us to sustain the work that keeps this university running. **I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.**

Here are just a few excerpts of what students have shared about my teaching over the past three years:

“Ms. Worawongwasu was and continues to be one of the most influential people in my life. I truly believe that Ms. Worawongwasu and her teachings have changed my life and career path for the better. Her class opened my eyes to a world of work in Indigenous rights and sovereignty movements, which I am looking to enter as I continue on my academic journey. It was during my time as her student that I realized the importance of and my passion for Indigenous rights and sovereignty. Her class pushed me to further investigate the relationships between America and all groups of Indigenous peoples and to think critically about what I have learned about America and Indigenous peoples prior to the class. Ms. Worawongwasu’s teachings were so influential that my education since that class has been centered around the topics introduced to me by her.

The fervor in which she taught created such an engaging learning environment. I learned something new each and every class. Ms. Worawongwasu also cultivated a learning environment in which each person could feel comfortable asking any questions that they had or to share opinions safely. In class, she made it a point to make sure that every student felt valued and that their voice mattered, no matter what background they came from.

Ms. Worawongwasu's public and vocal support as an ally for the Kānaka 'Ōiwi community has made me feel that much more comfortable as a student of hers. Being of Hawaiian descent, I always felt supported and never spoken over by her or other classmates because of her allyship and the nurturing environment she created within the classroom.

Even after finishing my course with Mr. Worawongwasu, she continues to be a very supportive and trustworthy figure in my life. Whenever I needed a Letter of Recommendation, wanted to discuss American Studies material, or just wanted to chat about life, she made time for me. Before I officially declared American Studies as my minor, she met with me multiple times so that she could answer all my questions and so that I felt clear about what I was getting myself into. She has also met with me on multiple occasions just to talk about various topics that I am passionate about, like blood quantum and Indigenous education, so that I could learn more and sort through the thoughts that I had. I have never felt more supported by an educator before."

"Aree served as my section's Graduate Teaching Assistant for Kumu Brandy Nālani McDougall's Intro to Indigenous Studies course in Fall 2021. Of the many instructors I've come across in the UH system, from undergraduate to tenured, Aree is at the very top of my list. First and foremost, Aree is a living embodiment of conscious engagement with indigenous lands, waters, and communities. She is perfectly suited as a role-model for undergraduate students learning to ethically engage with the world around them. As an indigenous woman myself, I know very few people who dedicate their daily lives to decolonization and social justice more resolutely than Aree. From her fervent activism through Women's Voices Women Speak and the O'ahu Water Protectors, to her monthly commitment to mālama 'āina through Ka Papa Lo'i O Kānewai, to the full-time pursuit of her Ph.D. in American Studies with a Graduate Assistantship - to name a few of her involvements known to me - I am often left astonished at the way Ms. Worawongwasu still moves through the world with such tenacity and grace.

As an instructor, Aree critically engages students in the examination of their privileges and positionalities, while extending compassion and holding a safe space for this exploration. In what appeared to be an inexplicably difficult semester for many, I watched as Aree managed to facilitate meaningful discourse with at times minimal student engagement. On a practical level, between all her commitments, Aree is incredibly prompt in responding to any course-related questions or concerns. She has given the most impactful academic feedback of any instructor I've worked with. When our class met for optional mālama 'āina workdays in relation to our final project, Aree always found the time to be present. Beyond the course material, Aree's expansive knowledge of worldwide indigenous issues was evident in her frequent "plugging" of organizations and movements for students to support. I was once surprised and heartened to see Aree share the information for Prutehi Litekyan, an organization of land and water protectors on my home island of Guāhan. Her capacity for global social awareness is incredible to witness and something I aspire to."

"Aree is amazing! She always led thought provoking discussions and allowed students to share and work through their thoughts in a supportive way."

"I truly appreciate our GA, Aree. She did a lot of the grading and accepting papers as well as leading discussions. Most of the time, I enjoy emailing her with questions because it felt more

comfortable to do so due to her welcoming presence. She is also understanding of technical difficulties that may prevent us from submitting assignments online.”

“Aree was very kind, endlessly patient, and always helpful. She was a great leader for the discussion sections.”

“Very helpful! She was able to look over my essays and give me feedback so I could get a better grade. Facilitated classroom discussions well, making them engaging and relevant to the lecture.”

“I always felt like I could express my thoughts and opinions in our class section. Our discussions were super insightful and fun. I appreciate you being so understanding and flexible with our work and readings. It was SUPER helpful and I appreciate it.”

As you can see from these evaluations and letters of support, Graduate Assistants such as myself make a profound impact on our students and to the future of higher education in Hawai‘i.

For all my work and stellar reviews from my students — some of whom have gone on to become graduate students at the University of Hawai‘i themselves with my guidance — the poverty wages, poor working conditions, labor violations, and lack of effective grievance processes, have left me little choice but to go on a medical leave of absence for this Academic Year in order to recover from the mental and physical toll these exploitative working conditions have put on me. This leave of absence has slowed down my degree progress, and while I am able to recover my health in Thailand, where we have universal healthcare, the same cannot be said for the many domestic and international students who also faced health issues due to our poor working conditions. While I am choosing to return to the University of Hawai‘i this Fall and become a Graduate Assistant again, it is with the conviction and hope that I will return as part of a new collective bargaining unit which addresses the unique labor challenges that Graduate Assistants at the University of Hawai‘i face.

Mahalo,

Aree Worawongwasu, International Students Committee Chair and Constitutional Revision Co-Chair of Academic Labor United.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 5:44:47 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Madi Davis | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I'm Madeline, a graduate student from Oceanography, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 back to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

This bill means everything to us. We deserve the opportunity to fight for fair pay. Thank you.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 7:38:40 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Maggie Bradley | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I'm Maggie Bradley, a GA from the School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 back to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 12:35:15 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shannon McClish | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Shannon McClish, a graduate assistant in oceanography, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 1:16:52 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hannah Rozendo | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Hannah, a Graduate Teaching Assistant at UH Hilo, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 3:08:59 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Zain Jabbar | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I am Zain and I support HB2720.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 3:34:05 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Ioanna Gotschall | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Ioanna Gotschall, a graduate student from University of Hawai'i at Hilo and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 4:13:48 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Anna Ezzy | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees,

My name is Anna Ezzy and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawai'i at Hilo in Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science. I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

This bill opens a pathway for graduate student workers like me to address our concerns by creating a bargaining unit for us, so we can finally directly bargain with our employers, the State of Hawai'i and the Board of Regents, to improve our living and working conditions. On January 4, 2024, the Hawai'i Labor Relations Board classified us as public employees, with the right to collectively bargain. We believe that the best path forward is for us graduate student workers to take ownership of our contract negotiations. We hope the legislature grants us this opportunity to bargain for our rights, similar to how our counterparts in the continent have been doing so for the past 50 years. Please revert HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain and pass this measure favorably out of your committees.

Mahalo,

Anna Ezzy

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/16/2024 4:32:51 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Emma Stierhoff | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Dear Chairs Aquino and Kim, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani, and members of the committees,

My name is Emma Stierhoff, and I am a former Graduate Assistant and Tropical Conservation Biology and Environmental Science Master's student at the University of Hawai'i in Hilo. I am writing to urge you to support HB 2720 in its current ammended form to secure the right for all Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain.

Graduate Assistants provide research, administrative, and teaching labor that is integral to the functioning of UH. Personally, I carried many responsibilities from teaching undergraduates to IT work to managing the department website to running workshops for grades K-12. Despite the crucial role we play in the UH system, for many years, Graduate Assistants were denied the ability to exercise their right to collectively bargain over the terms of their contracts as part of a union. As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to prioritize their quality of life and health. Please pass HB2720 to uphold the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

Mahalo nui for the opportunity to testify,

Emma Stierhoff

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 3:09:27 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Jason Mark Alexander | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Jason Mark Alexander. I have served as a Graduate Assistant for 2.5 years and am a 6th year PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Hawai‘i. I strongly support HB2720, ideally with reamendment to HD2 to instantly uphold the constitutional right for all 1,500+ Graduate Assistants in the UH system to collectively bargain, without gatekeeping via requiring a new HLRB petition. Through every month without this bill, UH administrators will continue to enjoy unjust profits while ignoring their well-documented trampling on our needs. When placed in CBU 16 specifically for the unique interests of research, clerical, and teaching work GAs perform at all hours of the day across the UH system, we can proceed as working adults in equal conversation with our employers, entitled to legal protections in negotiating workplace issues as we are living in and contributing to this state.

Graduate Assistants work while in their 20s, 30s, and older, with routine needs to support dependents and their own wellbeing while confronting the range of inequities of citizenship, race, gender, physical abilities, and generational situation. The decades-long denial of union rights is a shameful injustice by which UH can ignore the workers' situations. I have heard too many accounts from colleagues whose supervisors essentially interpret the bare-bones GA contract freely, with no oversight from department and college level administration because the short-term work demands override the welfare of the graduate assistants doing the work. My contract's specifications were always vague about Graduate Division and HR oversight of supervisor decisions, contained no benefits, and was not updated and reissued when sick leave and salary adjustments were instituted in August 2022, so I had no contracted guarantee of these changes for my specific position, which was a major source of anxiety. Can you imagine having to work 60 hours per week, even though the contract sets a limit of 20, with no overtime pay? This is what happens at UH for many workers. There is a spiritual drain that comes from seeing your supervisor monopolize your time, forcing you to stretch your academic degree progress by years. Conditions vary depending on the supervisor, but the issue of workers having no systematically ensured influence on conditions, while the number of open positions in one's area of expertise is limited, encourages the trend of exploitation to go unchecked. It feels coercive, and there's not even job security throughout an academic career under the current system of single-year contracts that are not automatically renewable.

The University has not taken meaningful initiatives to understand workers' voices or incorporate our standpoints as both workers and students into the institutional priorities. In the new UH System Strategic Plan 2023-2029, approved on November 17 2022 by the Board of Regents, one

of the four imperatives is to Meet Hawai'i Workforce Needs of Today and Tomorrow. The Goal is to "Eliminate workforce shortages in Hawai'i while preparing students for a future different than the present," with primary metrics being the number of shortages and of number of students learning career skills. Nowhere in this framing is a consideration of the positionality of the thousands of students enrolled at UH who are also employees of UH during that period, nor the health and motivation of these workers even if they find a job, which is a crucial determinant of the very shortages the state is facing as people leave in disgust over employers' humiliating contract conditions. In town hall forums on the strategic plan, I raised this issue of excluding university laborers from the workforce of the state, including the urgent need for collective bargaining rights to help the university community as a whole meet all its constituents labor goals holistically. Disappointingly, as I see the exclusion of this consideration from the plan's structure and President Lassner's empty promises, it is crystal clear that UH administration is not going to seriously consider contract negotiations until this legislature passes this bill I testify on now. There won't be any meaningful workplace reform or pathways of discussion over issues until we establish them with everyone at the table.

I routinely feel obligated to warn enthusiastic professionals, potential arrivals to the UH system, that they can easily be placed at high risk of being exploited with no recourse to protect their health other than leaving the UH system itself. And they already know that, because so many other universities are more attractive to work at with established non-faculty unions giving people living wages and senses of safety in work environments. The conspicuous lack of a union, not just for graduate assistant workers but also for lecturers and undergraduate students, is causing a brain drain of people currently enrolled as living costs and workplace stresses increase. It particularly blocks out people without financial and social wealth and safety nets, as well as international students from all over the globe as visa conditions further limit what workers can do to survive the slippages between the unilaterally imposed contracts and reality.

As workers for a public employer, all GAs deserve the right to collectively negotiate their contracted working conditions to determine the quality of their lives, their health, and the well-being of their communities in Hawai'i. I urge you to listen to the voices of GA workers struggling with poverty wages, supervisor abuse, and other grievances. Please pass HB2720 to enable workplace negotiations that will find resolutions to these issues, and stop excluding this category of workers from this right.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 4:16:18 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Tatsuki Kohatsu | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Tatsuki Kohatsu and I am a graduate student in the Geogprahy department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Thank you so much for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 7:19:26 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Meagan Harden | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Meagan Harden and I am a graduate student at UH. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 8:18:17 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| teri skillman | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees,

My name is Teri Skillman and I am a former graduate assistant during my master's and doctoral deagrres at UHM. I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

As an APT employee in Bargaining Unit 8 and the associate director of a center, I know that graduate students need a separate bargaining unit and they need their constitutional right to bargain collectively. I supervise 5 GAs and it would be inappropriate to have GAs in the same unit 8 as APT positions.

Please pass HB2720 HD2. I stand in strong support.

Mahalo,

Teri Skillman

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 9:37:26 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Lilly Fisher | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Lilly Fisher; I am a graduate student worker in the American Studies department at UH Mānoa, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 12:06:57 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|--------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Shannon Pomaika'i Hennessey | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Sen Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees.

I'm Shannon Pōmaika'i Hennessey, a GA from the Department of Political Science, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 12:07:24 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Andrew Meyer | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Andrew Meyer, a PhD Student from the Physics Department at UH Manoa, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. As public employees, it is our right to collectively bargain for our wages and working conditions, as our graduate assistant counterparts on the mainland have been doing for over 50 years.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 1:12:17 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Lauryn Pisciotto | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

I'm Lauryn Pisciotto, a graduate student from the Department of Oceanography , and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 back to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 1:33:44 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Hannah Manshel | Individual | Comments | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha, Chairs Sen. Donna Mercado Kim and Sen. Henry Aquino of the Senate Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Hannah Manshel, a faculty member from the department of English at UH Manoa, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 to HD 2 which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 2:55:41 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mary Bannister | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and TEchnology Committees. My name is Mary Bannister and I am a TA in the Anthropology department. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration

LATE

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 3:31:13 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Korey Wetherell | Individual | Comments | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chair Senator Donna Mercado Kim and Senator Henry Aquino of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. My name is Korey Wetherell and I am a TA in the Department of Geography and the Environment. I support reverting HB2720 HD 3 to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain. Mahalo for your consideration."

LATE

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/17/2024 4:13:05 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Alan Tong | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Chairs Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Sen Henry Aquino and the Higher Education and Labour Technology Committee,

My name is Alan Tong and I am a graduate assistant at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa in the mathematics department. I am writing in support of reverting HB2720 to HD2 which allows graduate assistants to form a union. It would have a positive influence on my life and the lives of other graduate students by allowing us to bargain with the university for rights and compensation we currently do not have. In fact, it is only after COVID mostly ended that we obtained sick leave for a week. That is aside from the other labour issues that us graduate assistants must work with. Thank you.



UNITED PUBLIC WORKERS

AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO

**THE SENATE
KA 'AHA KENEKOA
THE THIRTY-SECOND LEGISLATURE
REGULAR SESSION OF 2024**

COMMITTEE ON LABOR AND TECHNOLOGY

Senator Henry J.C. Aquino, Chair
Senator Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Vice Chair

COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Senator Donna Mercado Kim, Chair
Senator Michelle N. Kidani, Vice Chair

Monday, March 18, 2024, 3:00 PM
Conference Room 224 & Videoconference

Re: Testimony on HB2720, HD3 – RELATING TO COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Chairs Aquino and Kim, Vice Chairs Moriwaki and Kidani, and Members of the Committee:

The United Public Workers, AFSCME Local 646, AFL-CIO (“UPW”) is the exclusive bargaining representative for approximately 14,000 public employees, which includes blue collar, non-supervisory employees in Bargaining Unit 1 and institutional, health, and correctional employees in Bargaining Unit 10, in the State of Hawaii and various counties.

UPW supports the intent of HB2720, HD3, which exempts graduate assistants from collective bargaining until they petition the Hawaii Labor Relations Board and the Board determines the graduate assistants are ready to be placed in a bargaining unit, at which point a collective bargaining unit for graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii and its community college system will be established.

UPW supports the right of all employees to collectively bargain their wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment, including graduate assistants employed by the University of Hawaii System and its affiliated campuses. The various work-related issues that graduate assistants continue to encounter could fairly be addressed by the collective bargaining process. By eliminating the current exclusion of this group from collective bargaining, as proposed by the language of this bill, and creating a unique bargaining unit, graduate assistants will be provided the ability to resolve differences in contract negotiations with the employer. While we support

HEADQUARTERS

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Honolulu, Hawaii 96817-1914
Phone 808.847.2631

HAWAII

362 East Lanikaula Street
Hilo, Hawaii 96720-4336
Phone 808.961.3424

KAUAI

2970 Kele Street, Suite 213
Lihue, Hawaii 96766-1803
Phone 808.245.2412

MAUI

841 Kolu Street
Wailuku, Hawaii 96793-1436
Phone 808.244.0815

1.866.454.4166

Toll Free - Molokai/Lanai only

the intent of this bill, UPW will defer to the graduate assistants to determine if Part III of the is appropriate or necessary.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify on this measure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kalani Werner", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Kalani Werner
State Director

HEADQUARTERS

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LATE

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 11:34:36 AM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Emily Schkeryantz | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Aloha Sen Donna Mercado Kim and Sen Henry Aquino, Chairs of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I'm Emily Schkeryantz, a unionized graduate student worker from the University of Wisconsin Madison, and I support reverting HB 2720 HD 3 back to HD 2, which upholds the constitutional right of graduate assistants to collectively bargain.

LATE

HB-2720-HD-3

Submitted on: 3/18/2024 5:19:42 PM

Testimony for LBT on 3/18/2024 3:00:00 PM

| Submitted By | Organization | Testifier Position | Testify |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| AJ Vincelli | Individual | Support | Written Testimony Only |

Comments:

Hello Sen. Mercado Kim and Sen. Aquino, Chairs of the Higher Education and Labor and Technology Committees. I am AJ Vincelli, and I'm the co-founder and co-organizer of the Graduate Student Union at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. I support **REVERTING HB 2720 HD3 BACK TO HD2**, allowing graduate student employees at the University of Hawai'i to exercise their constitutional right to organize and improve their working conditions, perform stronger research, win more grants, and increase the prestige of the university. Grad worker unionization is a clear win-win for both employee and employer! Thank you.